

# well informed

*A quarterly publication for the well-being of employees everywhere from Methodist Healthcare*

## SPECIAL EDITION

As these words go down on paper for a Special Edition of *Well Informed*, we're struck with how trite they may seem in light of the devastation Katrina caused in Louisiana and Mississippi. That said, regardless of the size and scope of the tragedy, there are basic care issues of concern. Of course, the need for food, shelter, and clothing is basic, and is of primary concern in the aftermath of Katrina. As these basic needs are being addressed in many different ways, we begin our work with the emotional aspects of trauma. Following are ways to assist displaced persons if you are a caregiver. Also noted are self-care aides for those so profoundly affected individuals - the survivors.

Wherever you find yourself during these days following this tragedy, know that the Methodist Healthcare Employee Assistance Program, and literally millions of others, hold all of you who are directly and closely affected in our thoughts and prayers.

## SUPPORTING ROLE STRATEGIES

Those supporting traumatized individuals can help them cope with their reactions. Your genuine concern and willingness to listen can help restore some semblance of normalcy.

### Do's

- Do acknowledge the event. Do say you are sorry about what happened and sorry they have been hurt.
- Do remember that you cannot take away pain. You can share it and help them feel less alone. Be willing to say nothing, just be there.
- Do listen and allow the person to share at his/her own pace. Understand that periods of silence can be healing.
- Do let your genuine concern and care show.
- Do ask, "What do you need?" Offer solid, practical help such as cooking an occasional meal or watching the children.
- Do provide your companionship. Gently encourage physical activity. You may ask if he person wants to join you for a walk, etc....
- Do understand that the following are normal stress reactions:
  - \*Reduced concentration
  - \*Withdrawal
  - \*Sadness
  - \*Guilt
  - \*Anger or frustration
- Try to accept any anger or instability. This is not a time to argue.
- You may not understand what they are going through, but offer your support and love. Remember, these are common reactions to an abnormal situation.

### Don'ts

- Don't avoid the person because you feel helpless, uncomfortable, or don't know what to say. Do not pretend that nothing happened.
- Don't offer false comfort. Avoid cliches like "Be brave," "It was God's will," "You are doing so well," "Time will heal," "You can get on with your life," "I know how you feel."
- Don't ask intrusive questions or push for details. Don't change the subject when he/she is talking about the event.
- Don't assume that a person's spiritual/religious beliefs are the same as yours.
- Don't offer advice if it has not been asked for. Avoid saying, "You should..."
- Don't be afraid of a show of emotion. Don't discourage tears.





**Employee Assistance  
Program**

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## ***FOR SURVIVORS***

- You have been through a catastrophic event. Your feelings are normal and you are having normal reactions – don't label yourself as abnormal.
- Consult a physician if concerned about your condition.
- Periods of tears will overwhelm you at times.
- Spend time with others. Resist the tendency to isolate.
- Talk to people; talk is the most healing machine.
- Try to get some physical exercise if you're able; it will do wonders for you.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your reactions with others.
- Keep a journal. Write your way through sleepless times.
- Try to get rest and eat regularly, even if you don't feel like it.
- Make as many daily decisions as possible in order to regain some amount of control.
- Recurring thoughts and flashbacks are normal. They will begin decreasing over time.
- You have experienced a traumatic event of mammoth size. Know that you will experience physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and spiritual readjustment.
- Be gentle with yourself and your loved ones.

## ***HELPING CHILDREN COPE***

Hurricanes bring stress to an entire family, but especially children. Their deep sense of vulnerability, lack of understanding and difficulty communicating how they feel make them particularly at risk in disaster situations. Below are some suggestions for helping children through these difficult times.

- Speak simply and honestly about the situation.
- Be available and "askable."
- Encourage your child to express thoughts and feelings.
- Help children use creative outlets like art and music to express how they feel.
- Let children know that it's okay to feel upset. Assure your child that his/her responses (symptoms) are normal.
- Find ways to protect your child from unnecessary exposure to traumatic stimuli such as media coverage of the devastation and others' reaction.
- Reassure them. Use statements like, "It's been scary but we will always love you and take care of you."
- Make sure children know the family's difficulties are not their fault.
- Give them extra patience. After a crisis, children may act younger than they are.
- Take care of your own emotions and stress. Call EAP for help.

***1-800-880-5658 or 901-683-5658***

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